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ABSTRACT

Recent research on mass media, with a particular emphasis on television, is reviewed for the effects that the media has on behavior and the use of media in educational endeavors. Although a very pessimistic view is taken concerning the contribution of specific research studies, it is emphasized that one should not underestimate their importance, for research is seen to have contributed some very important general concepts. The view that television and other mass media have been the irresistible dominator of socialization is heavily exaggerated: one needs to consider many other factors, such as psychological, societal and environmental influences, and the credibility of truth or view of society as presented by mass media has to be questioned seriously and checked. Many of mass media's possibilities, intentions, and limitations could be clarified by understanding not only the media's messages, but also their structure and process through professional, political, and economic considerations. (Author)

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MEDIA RESEARCH AND MEDIA EDUCATION-

Controversy, contradiction and complement

by

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Media Research and Media Education - controversy, contradiction and complement *

This article will discuss the relationship between media research and media education. After some considerations about mass-media and their possible effects on socialisation we will discuss briefly the various approaches found in media-research. Then we shall raise the problem of the educator in choosing his way in media-education, and finally we shall offer some suggestions for a more useful relationship between education and research in this field.

A. Some Considerations about mass-media and education

It is generally agreed that in our days mass-media has to be regarded as one of the more important environmental factors in human society. These media contribute to various areas of human life: intellectual, emotional, social, moral, cultural, economical, political and even physical life is affected in this or that form by mass-media.

They satisfy also many of human psychological needs: entertainment for dispersion, illusion, tension-release, escape from troubles and reality, sharing of experience with others, things to think and to talk about - and others.

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* Conclusions from research conducted at the Centre for Mass Communication Research, Leicester, England (1978)

Education has to help the individual to develop his personality and to find his place in society, according to his own potential qualities. Formal education, its ways and means are goal-directed. These goals have been determined and defined according to the ideology of each society, in order to achieve the socialisation of the young generation into a desired society of tomorrow.

But aims and ends, and means as well, have to be taken into account the social reality at present, and the various environmental factors in social life. Mass-media are one of these factors, which have taken their place as socialisation agents, not less, in our days, than the primary groups, formal education and other controlled and goal-directed educational institutions.

The rapid development of mass-media has forced education to reorientate itself, and to change some of its basic concepts. One of the most affected is that of the widening circles of human experience. In the past it was generally accepted, that during the first years of his life, the child gets his experience almost completely from his family as his primary group and the circle widened gradually and included more and more of the physical environment of his living quarters and more learning-experiences during primary education, which broadened also his intellectual and social life. Later on, after achieving more intellectual skills and knowledge, the world has been opened to him by personal experience, peer groups, literature, newspapers, etc.

Many of these factors could be controlled, and directed, more or less, in accordance with the values, attitudes, intentions and expectations of the responsible authorities of each group.

Mass-media have broken many of these barriers and controls, and have brought about the opening of the circle to its widest extent much earlier than before. Newspapers, radio and films brought the child in audial and visual contact with the wider - and even widest - world. No longer can we speak of only "here and now" experience at any stage of education, because mass-media provide plenty of "there and then" situations, available to all.

As long as the gathering of uncontrolled broader information needed intellectual efforts, such as newspaper reading, audial concentration to the spoken word for radio listening or investment of physical energy and money for going out to the cinema - these agents, although available to almost everyone, were not used to the same extent as it is now, after the penetration of TV into almost all of our homes. Its messages were available without needing any effort apart from just sitting in the living room and getting plenty of broad information about the then and there, presenting also attitudes, values and a general outlook on the wide world, and a variety of entertainment - most of it not intended for an audience of youngsters.

All that is supplied by most sophisticated and effective means, in order to make televiewing easy, enjoyable and fascinating. As has been found by many surveys and researches, TV has achieved even a dominant place in satisfying many of the psychological needs of the youngsters, and the amount of viewing, even during term time, is not much less - and in certain populations even much more - than the hours of sitting in the classroom.

Therefore it would be understandable to expect some kind of uncontrollable influence by mass-media on the conceptions, attitudes, values and even behaviour of our children; and this may justify calling mass-media, and especially TV, "the hidden partners in education".

But in an open, democratic society we should not see these media simply as "dangerous competition" to education, and therefore do all that can be done to minimise the viewing - as far as this is at all possible - or at least to develop an hostile attitude towards their messages. Knowledge is reality and, basically, it is the right of every citizen to achieve it; even this "knowledge", as we shall see below, is achieved and built up by information that may be right or wrong, true or distorted, useful or suspected to be harmful, overt or hidden.

So we have to see the existence of mass-media as an educational factor by itself, which has to be incorporated into the broader educational

system, like many other social factors in modern society. And as we have to prepare our children to relate to other institutions of society, we should prepare them to live with TV and know how to use it.

Thus we have to ask ourselves, what part could and should TV and other mass-media take in our educational efforts.

The answer depends on our knowledge of what possible effects TV has - or may have - on the development of our childrens' personality, if any at all, and, not less the belief that education has the necessary power and suitable ways to do anything about it: to minimise possible undesired effects, but, no less, and with the same seriousness, to make use of mass-media in our efforts to achieve our educational aims of the desired socialisation of our children - each society and each group according to its specific set of values, norms and ideology. Therefore, we have to develop our conceptions about media-education in two steps: First - to find out what the possible effects of mass-media are, and then - what should and could be done.

If research could provide relevant evidence for such effects, their sources, directions, dimensions, impacts and also limitations, we could offer the necessary facts and conclusions to the decision-makers in education for their planning of aims, ways and means (albeit, as we will see below, there is not always a clear and easy path from research leading to education).

B. Media research - what is its message for media-education?

Research in social science is usually done according to certain assumptions, which are inter-related to current ideologies, theories and practical needs, which by themselves depend to a great extent on the social situation in each country or social group.

New social phenomena can only be searched, investigated, analysed and judged by using existing concepts of social life and the various existing approaches of human-related disciplines, such as psychology, sociology, philosophy, economy, political science, etc. But in most - if not all - of those disciplines themselves we may find various approaches, or "schools", which dominate in different eras and different countries. Since also many of the environmental facts and factors change with time and place, we may expect a wide, changing spectrum of research.

That holds for most of research in social sciences, and we shall see that in media research all these factors - and others too - brought about a wide range of research not just complementary, but many of them contradictory - some even irrelevant - to each other, in their assumptions, orientation, results and conclusions.

In order to prepare our understanding of the most problematic situation of the decision-makers in media education, it seems necessary to give a brief description of the varying and changing perspectives in the

study of mass-media; and according to our main concern, we will focus on the studies regarding mass-media on socialisation.

The basic research question, common to almost all of the earlier writings and researches, could be formulated as "what TV does to people (and especially - to children?" The main concern was with the effects of mass-communication in general, and especially of TV, which took over many of the functions of other mass-media, based on psychological aspects.

The audience was seen as atomistic, and the individual as a self-evident unit in mass-communication, psychologically isolated from others, and thus unable to defend itself against messages communicated by mass-communication, which were seen, at that stage, almost irresistable[1]. This approach was prevalent in the development of the predominantly American study on the impact of the media.

Later on this approach was challenged by the concepts of social psychology. Although attention focussed more on the social nature of the individual audience member, and on social factors in his experience which mediate his selection and reception of mass-communication, it was still the "individual social differences" that influenced and determined the role of media in the children's life. And still in 1971 we may find the opinion of Schramm - who was one of the first to write on the process and effects as early as 1954 - that "media use varies with age, I.Q., creativeness, family socio-economic status, season of the year and so on ... the

determining elements of media use appear to be personal and social".[2] Although the social factor is also already taken into account, the difficulty in coping with this factor was rooted in the implicit model used in the bulk of mass-communication research. The initial preoccupation with the "effects" of the media implied a communication-model analogous to the S-R model in psychological behaviourism. The mass-communicated message is the stimulus, and the effect is the response. Later on this was replaced by the S-O-R model, "O" consisting of individual and social factors which were hypothesised to mediate the S-R process. This model was capable of tackling questions of the kind "which media, under what conditions, lead to what effects among which children?" It is now agreed in most of the writings, that both aspects, the psychological and the social as well, have to be taken into account in study and discussions about mass-media and its possible effects. There may be more emphasis on the one or the other discipline, mainly according to the scientific background of the researcher; but each has to include also the other aspect in his considerations and conclusions.

In recent writing, more stress has been laid on the broader relationship between TV and society, asking not only about effects on antisocial behaviour, but pride of place has been also given to pro-social behaviour, or more generally, to the contribution of TV to socialisation in its broader aspects.

The dominant approach in socialisation research is predicted on a passive view of the individual, and on a consensual view of society. Socialisation conceptualised as the passive acceptance by the individual of the "transmission of culture", with its values and norms of the existing society. That approach found its way also to much media research on socialisation. But McCron offers an alternative perspective for the meaning of socialisation, by seeing the individual as an active, social being involved in interaction, rather than reaction. Not only has society to shape the child, but the growing youngster may also take his part in socialising society. The active view of socialisation allows, therefore, also the possibility of social change. And this approach should be, as it has been expressed by some writers, one of the most important matters for mass-media research in our changing society.

Although that kind of research has yet to be developed, it is now generally accepted that mass-media must be seen in a total social context, and that they are indeed a source of meaning in the communication of ideas.

In this section we tried to outline the changing general perspectives of mass-media research. In the following sections we shall mention some of the contradictory results and conclusion of this mass-media research in some of the central fields of possible effects.

1. Violence and Aggression

The "effects" research emphasised from its beginning the generally expressed concern about possible "dangerous" impacts of mass-communication on children, and was, therefore, concentrated mainly on the role of mass-communication in creating, fostering, reinforcing, triggering, or perhaps also in weakening aggression and violence. That was also the main purpose of the studies that brought about the report of the "Surgeon General's Study" (1972) in U.S.A., and still in 1976, when the British TV research committee was established, these concerns were part of its conceptions.[3]

If we come to summarise the many researches actually done in this direction - F. Scott-Anderson gives the results of more than 70 studies during the years 1956-1976, in which over 30,000 subjects have been tested[4] - not to mention the many theoretical writings in this field - we might expect some common output of facts and conclusions which would enable a better understanding of the issue and should demand educational - and maybe also social - reactions of some kind. But, as a matter of fact, we are presented with a wide range of "scientific empirical evidence" for almost all what may be possible in the relationship between mass-media and violence.

In summing up Scott-Andison cites 3 researches which give evidence on a somewhat negative effect of viewing TV violence on the viewers' aggression (the "cathartis", or drive-reducing theory of Feshbach and others); 14 for "non-effects" (Himmelweit, Emery, Schramm a.o.); 27 for weak positive effects, 25 for moderate positive ones, and even 4 for "strong positive". His conclusion is, therefore, that "it seems reasonable to tentatively accept the TV violence as a stimulant to aggression theory and to reject the 'no-difference' and 'cathartic' theories, at least until further, contradictory, study is completed concerning this matter".*

A similar conclusion may be found in the paper of G. Comstock: "Effects of TV on children - what is the evidence?" (1975)[5], based on the hearings and findings of the U.S. Surgeon General's Scientific Advisory Committee on TV and social behaviour: "...the most scientifically justifiable conclusion, given the available evidence, is that violent TV entertainment increases the probability of subsequent aggressive behaviour on the part of children and youth. However, the case cannot be said to be closed..."

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* It may be of interest to find, that the U.S. studies, of which 60 were detailed, show a substantially more skewed distribution to the positive, than the 13 reported from other countries! But the summerised results, in five year blocks, turn from a mainly positive-strong positive position towards the "non-effects"and weak positive one.

But these or similar formulated conclusions do not say anything to the educator! It would be quite strange to decide on such controversial and contradictory issues according to the quantitative advantage of a certain approach to the discussed issue. And while looking through the polling of the conclusion, mounted by Comstock as a "review of reviews", we may find also the whole range of approaches: from the clear positive effects of televiewing on aggression tactics and countless methods of murder (Bandura, 1973)* and similar views (Goranson, 1970) or finding at least a high probability of positive effects (Berkowitz, 1962) and similar conclusions (Liebert, Neale and Davidson, 1973), through expected reinforcing of existing behavioural tendencies, good or ill, of individual audience members (Klapper, 1960), to the conclusions that "a careful scrutiny of the formal scientific literature does not yield evidence that warrants a judgement linking the increased violence in the U.S. to the portrayal of violence in fiction or news on TV or movie film." Comstock, in his discussion, mentions many different considerations, concepts, hypotheses and factors which influence research and conclusions, making some data even irrelevant to the issue; and, therefore, the consequence may be to preclude resolution of the problem.

And even more definite is the conclusion of the comprehensive review of the available empirical and theoretical literature by Howitt and

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* Sources cited by Comstock are brought in brackets.

Cumbarbatch, that "the mass-media do not have any significant effect on the level of violence in society"[6].

Not only is this statement, in the words of McCron, "a disturbing, not to say sad, reflection on the state of mass-communication, that in 1975 ... the summated findings of a major field of research activity must be suffixed by such a damning caveat", but it is, for its practical application, a most serious and perplexing one for the educator, who has, once again, to commit himself to this or that approach, using mainly his own criteria and considerations, in order to make his decision if, or how, to plan his educational activity.

2. Attitudes

For theeveryday work of the educator the knowledge about possible effects on attitudes, their formation, maintenance or change, seems to be much more important than the results of violence-effect researches. If mass-media indeed have any considerable influence on attitudes, they should be regarded as rivals, but maybe also as co-operators with school, home and other controlled socialisation agencies. If evidence would prove that there is much influence - remembering the great amount of weekly viewing, as mentioned before, we could justify the statement that "the flow of information which young people now receive from the media outside their formal schooling, calls into question the whole content of school programmes."[7]

But, how important reliable knowledge about mass-media's impact on attitudes may be, it is, in theory and in practice as well, one of the most disputed issues; not only in connection with mass-media, but as a basic question of possibilities and ways of attitude-forming and attitude-change.

Media research, in this field too, has not helped to make the educators' decision much easier:

Comstock[5], in his summing-up of research results on direct effects of mass-media, found considerable commulated evidence that TV does effect the beliefs and the behaviour of young people, although that could be said rather of qualitative effects and of their direction, than of the quantitative ones.

J. Halloran , in his study of attitude forming and change[8], lists the possible roles of the media in attitude-forming, although they are conditioned by many other supporting factors. Klapper[9] sees in mass-communication a mainly contributing cause of effects, although in certain residual situations it seems also to produce direct effects, even such as minor attitude changes. Both of them, and other writers mentioned by Comstock, try to analyse and to define the probability of effects, and its limitation. Generally, there can be found many similar approaches to those which have been mentioned before in connection with the possible

effect on violence and aggression. On the one hand, Maletzke, in writing about the psychological aspects of mass-media[10], states that "the indisputable fact of the great part of mass-media, together with other factors, in determining attitudes ..." raises various problems for researchers, and his opinion is shared by a great number of authors', quoted by Comstock. On the other hand, many other conclusions, in the direction of "no-effect" have also been brought in his review. More of them are also expressed by other authors: Howitt[11] argues, that real life influences will have operated over and above the mass-media, albeit that can be said mainly of non-cummulative changes. The most we could assume is what certain effect could mass-media have, but really we can't simply know if mass-media, acting as they do, have such effects.

Another consideration for educators, which includes also a challenge for further research, is made in another book by Schramm[12]: "... the effects of communication that have most to do with determining what we are and what we do, are the quiet effects of the never ceasing flow of information to us, through us and from us. Our ways of seeking information ... determine our picture of our environment and our images of ourselves ... they underline all the change effects we have been talking about ... but because they accumulate and are in constant process of being added to, clarified, revided and confirmed, they do not invite the kind of short-term change studies that attitude researchers like to do; communication

researchers, however, have to face up to the need of studying questions about continuous effects."

More about the researches on the effectiveness and and persuasive power of the mass-media may be found in the writings of D. McQuail[13], and a broad and quite balanced discussion, in German, has been offered by R. Rocek[14].

In conclusion we have to agree with Halloran[15], that the very existence of so many competing approaches and the range and nature of disputes make it clear that there are many problems still to be solved. And this, in his words, can be confusing ...

3. The "view-of society" and General Knowledge

Much more agreed conclusions may be found about the influence of TV on the creation of the view of society and the wide world, especially by youngsters. That has been found already by Himmelweit in her research[16], stating that although the influence is not overpowering, it is solid and consistent. This view is created by many ways in various kinds of programmes. The news, documentary, but also drama and other entertainment. Comstock cites evidence for the generally accepted belief that young persons, like adults, typically believe TV news is credible. Halloran states in one of his papers[17] that more and more people appear to be relying on TV as their main source of news on a variety of issues,

as TV is seen as a very credible medium ... People form their view of society and develop their social consciousness ... as a result of the interaction between mediated culture and experience, and non-mediated (real, personal or situational) culture and experience. And also Noble[18] argues that the media - not only by the news - help to define the child's expectations of real life, social, occupational and national roles, stereotypes ...

This mediated view should challenge much of our educational work. For various reasons, which are commonly known, the view of society supplied by mass-media is only partial, and may be distorting, misleading, irritating and raising unrealistic expectations and aspirations, as has been demonstrated by Faulkner in his study of media use by Asian immigrant girls in England[19]. As far as this is done - and one should not neglect to recognise and to appreciate also the medias' great contribution to our general knowledge and information - the possible psychological and social damage is done not only to the individual as such in the present, but also as an active member of the growing society of tomorrow.

The shaping of the picture of the world is not in our hands. It is the media which set out the motion for the definitions of situations and problems, explanations, alternative remedies and solutions which were available to us, and for all of them it is the media which draw the rules and regulations and invite the speakers for the debate[20]. All of those

are developed according to the broadcasters obsession to hold a large audience, the looming presence of powerful political interests, the desire - at least on the side of the commercial networks - to make profit, and the fact that broadcasters are servile to established institutions[21].

As Halloran concludes: In operating this way ... within their values framework, do the news media - and one may add: also other media-messages - provide the information we need in order to be able to act as informed and intelligent decision-makers in democratic societies? The evidence ... from studies ... leaves us no choice but to reply in the negative.

But the basic part in socialisation is knowledge, achieved by learning. We may agree with Schramm, that people learn enormous amount from the media, especially if they are the main source for the topic[22]. But no matter if we claim to have or have not the right to control information or knowledge - at least for children and youngsters! - in a real democratic open society we have to be aware that knowledge - available as it is, may be regarded as something "good" or "bad" - relative as those concepts may be - for the individual and/or the society: It may be good for the individual and good for society in broadening horizons and in breaking down provincialism by bringing isolated communities and individuals into touch with metropolitan life and

central government; bad for both, insofar that it provides stimulation for antisocial and aggressive behaviour; irrelevant - if the individual has formed already is own personality, opinions and values. But knowledge may also be good for the individual and irrelevant for society, and even bad for the individual and good for society, or at least for interested parts of it, if that knowledge is misleading in the case of propaganda, indoctrination, political brainwashing, and also, in some ways of advertising.

Although we have sufficient evidence that knowledge is consumed heavily, we could rarely say what knowledge is consumed by whom, with what effect on his attitudes, opinions, values and behaviour. It is again only the quality and direction which we can - more or less - recognise, but it would still be difficult to rely on study-results when educational decisions have to be made.

So it would be the educators' task to create a profitable relation with mediated knowledge - as it should be done generally also to direct personal experience: To use and to internalise the "good" messages, and to reject, or at least to be able to discriminate or to criticise the "bad" or distorted ones and yet to enjoy the televiewing; although the necessary ways and skills, how that could be done effectively - various considerations and demonstrations have already been presented by Ed. Bucombe[23] and other English and German writers - has still to be proved.

4. Behaviour

Direct effects on mass-communication on behaviour, which could be studied empirically were only a few, and it seems that most of them are not effecting directly the personal or the social behaviour.

Patterns of leisure have changed. Where 3 to 6 hours daily are devoted to televiewing, not much time is left for other leisure activities. But there are different answers to the question, how far has TV displaced other leisure time activities, such as reading, radio, cinema, newspaper, hobbies, etc.[24] We have also to remember that in these days it becomes more and more difficult to compare viewers and control groups or viewers' behaviour before and after the introduction of TV.

It is obvious that televiewing has much influence on the daily time schedule, and one may even find that it has become one of its main factors.

Maybe that TV - especially where only one set exists in the home, and viewing is by most of the family, contributes to common experience and brings new focuses of interest into the home. And, surely, youngsters spend much more of their leisure time at home than before.

Other possible direct or indirect impacts of TV on behaviour are, as has been shown before, very difficult to define.

5. What people do with TV

We have seen that the basic question "what TV does to people" led to much controversy about possible effects in almost all directions of study, but even the researchers had to admit that they have, perhaps, taken upon themselves impossible tasks and expectations.

Therefore we have to mention another approach, led by Katz, Blumler and Gurevitch[25], which emphasises that "it is the children who use TV, rather than TV using them". This approach is representing an attempt to explain something of the way in which individuals use communication, among other sources in their environment, to satisfy their needs and to achieve their goals. It is based on the assumptions that the audience is conceived of as active, saying that an important part of mass-media use is assumed to be goal-directed, and that much initiative in linking need gratification and media-choice lies with the audience member.

"The uses and gratification" paradigm are concerned with 1) the social and psychological origins of 2) needs, which generate 3) expectations of 4) the mass-media or other sources, which lead to 5) different patterns of media-exposure (or engagement in other activities) resulting in 6) need gratifications and 7) other consequences, perhaps mostly unintended ones"

The importance of this approach is mainly in the direction of psychological - and may be also some sociological - understanding of media use rather than of media effects on attitudes or behaviour, and therefore it does not put direct operational questions or challenges to the educator. But, nevertheless, he has to be aware that the media, as assumed by Katz et. al., do not only satisfy needs, but, probably, also create them. And those needs have, perhaps, to be taken into account in educational practice.

C. The Educator's Dilemma

The above brief discussion of some of the various approaches to, and results of mass-media researches and writings has by no means pretensions of presenting a comprehensive survey on this broad and complicated field. The selective quotations and conclusions were presented in order to show the perplexing situation for educators.

Educational activity is as old as human history. For thousands of years it has been done - more or less successfully - without research. Ways, means and theories developed during the long history of mankind according to philosophical and ethical principles, on the one side, and by intuition and using former cumulative experience, on the other side. But in our century education, as many other areas of societal activities,

has become a matter of scientific disciplines, even if not a specific and independent one, but an interdisciplinary syndrom of scientific knowledge.

There should be no doubts, that education has to be one of the most important applied sciences, and the end of researches, theories and systems is to improve teaching and other educational activities, in order to prepare the growing generation for its part in the society - each one according to his ideology, interests and expectations.

In the era of rapid changes and of democratic pluralistic societies this task has become more and more difficult. Traditional education in modern societies is less and less effective. Educational research tried to find - as far as possible by scientific experimental methods - the better ways for education in the new post-industrial, technological, sophisticated and inter-national orientated modern society, taking into account the needs of the individual and society, as they are assumed to be by the various psychological and philosophical schools, the ability of the learner and the possibilities of the educators, according to previous, mainly psychological, scientific findings.

But - nevertheless, traditional patterns are changing very slowly - if at all. No matter what the reasons could be: political or professional interests, inertia of planners and teachers, community's or parent's

influence and pressures etc., we may state that in most countries the formal educational activity is far from satisfying the real needs of socialisation in modern society.

Fortunately, one may always find a small group of teachers and other educators, who are aware of the danger of being satisfied with existing patterns and try to cope with the neglect of urgent educational, and therefore social needs. That was one of the most impressive experiences I got during my study of mass-media education in this country. A remarkable number of studies and researches, the efforts of research-centres, Universities, Colleges and Polytechnics and the various conferences, publications and activities in this field by the BBC, IBA, BFI, SEFT and others should be seen as the effect of this group.

After having, fortunately, the opportunity to get a broad picture of existing research, and of teaching activity on several levels as well, the basic questions of every educational activity arose in its whole seriousness, regarding mass-media studies and mass-media education: What is the mutual relationship between research and teaching activity? What has been the part and the influence of scientific research on educational practice, and what could be the contribution of that practice to scientific research?

It is the first part of the above question, which seems to force dilemmas on every practitioner in education.

No doubt that researches have been done in order to guide and give an empirical and experimentally based direction for educational planning and activity. Could it be said that existing mass-media research has been able to give us such direction? The conclusion, based on the previous chapter, should be in the negative. Not that we have too little evidence and results, but just the contrary: we have evidence, scientifical and empirical, for almost every possible approach, as we have already found.

More than that: we have also been warned by some of the writers themselves, acknowledging this contradictory variety of research-results or even doubting the very possibility of valid research in this field, not to rely on it; with Howitt's words[26]: "There is no doubt that to draw any firm conclusion on the basis of available evidence about the effect of TV and film on violence is a risky occupation ..., the empiric research available says nothing which is reliable and specific enough to allow decisions to be made;" and what had been said regarding violence-effects may also be said, as we have already seen, for most of the other possible influence or persuasive power of mass-media.

But - educators <u>have</u> to make their decisions. The existence of mass-media is a fact. Their great, and maybe almost dominant part in our children's intellectual and emotional experience is obvious. Thus,

the responsibility of any serious social or educational institution is to find suitable ways to guide the growing generation, how to live with it, how to "use" it - in the broadest meaning of this term, and to provide an effective curriculum for social education, which takes into account not only the existence of the new media, but also its possible effects and uses - "good" or "bad" ones - for the individual and for society.

And here every planner or acting teacher will find himself in a dilemma: Research has been done, and there is evidence for remarkable effects on children in most of the various possible aspects; so he has to develop ways and means how to deal with this factor in this or that direction - as it has already been done or at least suggested by some educators: To train the youngsters for discriminating and critical viewing, in order to make them more conscientious consumers of the media's messages and more responsive to them, by either seriously analysing and discussing the contents, or by demystification of the medium itself by understanding its techniques, processes and conventions; to counterbalance possible - or expected - negative influences of certain kinds by more intensive work in various teaching situations; to analyse the messages and use them to challange the existing patterns of social life and perhaps also the dominant ideology; to use actively the possibility of influencing others by means of the media itself - and other open ways[27].

And if the need and justification for such activities have been acknowledged, every effort - financial, intellectual and practical - has to be made in order to meet the challenge effectively.

But - other research results claim definitively a "no-effect" approach, and they too are on an experimental and empirical basis. And if they are correct - with the same chances as the former ones - have we the right to make all these efforts of investing time, space and much money for the suggested courses, demanding changes in the curriculum and taking the place of other important topics?

The conclusion of Howitt and others is even more perplexing in itself: If media researches are basically not reliable because of the complexity of the various involved factors, neither the first nor the second approach could have any scientific evidence; but, nevertheless, each of them may in practice be right or wrong. So we may assume that we would not know, at least in the near future, if there are effects, what ones (if any), for whom and under what conditions.

So, again, the educator is left in a state of knowing too much and of knowing very little. And yet he has to make his decision.

From the moral point of view it seems that this decision should not be delayed until more reliable knowledge will be available. In education we cannot risk too much. The very possibility, if not

probability, of effects demands reaction and educational activity. And thus the assumption, that there have to be certain effects, may be quiet ones, even only under certain circumstances and conditions, for certain people or populations, in certain directions, should serve as a guideline for the educators' decision making.

But as a counter-balance for this pessimistic view about the contribution of the specific researches to education, it has to be emphasised that we should by no means underestimate their importance, even in their present state, for our educational practice. Research has contributed to media-education at least some very important general conceptions: the looking on TV and other mass-media as irrestible dominators of socialisation - to the good and to the bad - has been found to be heavily exaggerated; in mass-media study and mass-media education one has to take into account many other factors, not only psychological, as has been thought, but mainly societal and environmental ones; the credibility of the "truth" or of the view on society, as presented by mass-media, has to be questioned seriously and checked; much of mass-media's possibilities, intentions and limitations could be clarified by understanding not only the media's messages, but, even more, their structure and processes through professional, political and economical considerations; and one may find other useful conceptions as well.

But research has contributed not only by conclusions and conceptions, but also by defining the various possible fields of effects and of effectiveness, as we could show, although only partly and selectively, in this article. And by doing so, it has certainly stimulated educational activity, and sharpened our outlook and our considerations.

Another most important contribution to media-studies and media education has been done by media research in helping to achieve public attention to the whole phenomenon and to its importance for social life. And this public attention, not yet public opinion, may be of a great help by its understanding and, as we hope, supporting our educational efforts.

D. Media Research in Media Education

We come now to our last point, regarding the question of a desired mutual relationship between media-research and media-education.

Could there be any contribution by media practice to media research?

It seems that the introduction of mass-media studies for 'O' and 'A' level could supply the necessary research setting for further experimental studies about mass-media effects, under more or less, yet lifelike, controlled learning conditions. Maybe, that researchers could find their place as participants in the planning of the courses, in defining their aims - especially measurable ones, as far as possible,

and in designing the scientific apparatus for measuring short and long term effects, their directions, their variation at different ages, abilities, etc. Especially, the question of attitude forming, and perhaps also changing, would be an important field for further research in this framework of media-studies in secondary education, and although the procedure of attitude measuring is not easy, suitable and valid ways could be found[28]. The same could be said of the need for further research on the special effects of TV in shaping the view of society. But as useful as this further research would be, we could give it only secondary importance, and its possibilities have to be in full accordance with the primary educational aims.

It could be argued that such planning and teaching would be difficult, and even more, will possibly make some teaching and learning more restricted than intended; but it should be worthwhile trying, as far as there is justified prospect of gaining important experimental knowledge about media effects, which we still need so urgently.

But I would suggest considering yet another possible use of research for mass-media education, which, for the immediate needs of media-studies in secondary education may be even more important.

It maybe that we have to initiate, while developing our mass-media studies <u>planning</u>, the development of mass-media studies <u>research</u>. That

would enable researchers to take a most productive part in these studies. Unlike other topics and subjects, we have little real experience - if any at all - with this kind of study. Not only the necessity of these studies has been developed just by mere assumptions, but also what is planned to be done, its possibilities, ways, limitations and didactic means. I doubt if education can afford in our days to depend only on experience. So we have to mobilise our knowledge in scientific research in order to get - the sooner the better - reliable feedback of our work, for further goal-directed and remedial planning and activity. (A good beginning has already been made by "Viewpoints on Viewpoint"[29].)

As I said at the beginning of this article: All educational activity has to be aim-orientated. And since these aims should have been clearly defined before the beginning of any effectiveness-research on media-study courses, within the limits of their various intentions and possibilities, the achievement of a great deal of these aims could, probably, be measured by scientific procedures.

Within the framework of this article we cannot develop specific suggestions how that should be put into practice. Many considerations have still to be made. And, indeed, this would have to be done in close cooperation with research experts. But if it could be done, it may lead to a real mutual relationship between research and educational activity.

Thus - research could - and in my opinion, also should, be focused in the near future not only to the possible effects of mass-media, but more to the effectiveness of mass-media studies in secondary - and maybe even primary - education. I believe that such research would also supply valuable and meaningful information for further media-effect research itself.

Since this country has made so much progress in introducing media studies in education, such research could contribute very much not only to its own benefit, but also to other countries' success by developing reliable methods of research and, as is hoped, also by supplying reliable evidence for their effectiveness.

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